

Mister Newsletter Summer 2006

Techno



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Wireless Computing

Wires, wires and more wires. As we get more and more gizmos for our computers we get more and more wires. The tangle of power bars encrusted with transformer bricks, usb hubs, video and mouse cables etc. has made a nightmare behind the desk. The mouse wire in particular is a pain. It always seems to be too short and gets in the way or caught on something.

How does one reduce these wires? What happens when a computer needs to be moved to another room and there is no internet in there? Does one have to string network cables throughout the house? and where do they all connect to?

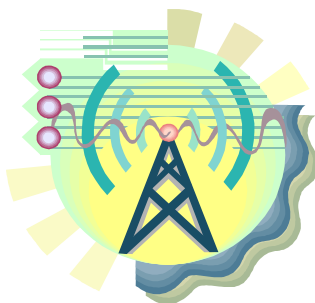
Wireless computing has been a promise for many years and is finally showing signs of maturity. We will still be stuck with the power adapters for recharging, but freedom from tethers is just around the corner.

Wi-Fi: Already wireless networking is very popular. Every laptop computer sold today has Wi-Fi wireless networking built in. Wi-Fi is also available for your desktop computer so that you may move it around the house and still have connectivity without the hassle of stringing a cat5 cable. Airports, hotels, Starbucks, etc. now have wireless "hotspots" where you can connect your wireless computer to the internet. Whole cities such as San Francisco are developing wireless networks where one may have wireless connectivity in the entire city. Connectivity is as good (or

bad) as a cell phone.

Wi-Fi comes in several types, "A" which is seldom seen, "B" which is most common and most basic, "G" high speed and is compatible with "B", and just around the corner is "N" which is the fastest of them all. Some machines call themselves "Pre-N" which is mainly a marketing ploy that will probably not be compatible to the final "N" specification.

IRDA: Many laptops and some computers include infra red technology. An infrared led is



used to communicate to capable peripherals over short distances. This is the same technology that is used to operate a TV remote control.

It is finicky to anything getting in the way of the light beam.

Radio: For many years simple radios have been used to operate keyboards and mice. These are very good as long as the receiving station is within 3 feet of the keyboard and mouse.

Bluetooth: This technology has lots of potential which is finally

starting to be realized. Encrypted radio signals are used to communicate between all sorts of devices. The primary benefit is secure wireless communications over a range of about 50 to 300 feet. Cell phones, handhelds, laptops, desktops, headphones, headsets, keyboards, mice, speakers, printers, scanners etc. can all take advantage of this technology.

The devices negotiate a secure radio channel and are "paired" to each other. Explicit permission has to be given to exchange data. Using this technology it becomes easy to sync databases, get your email and communicate to all of your devices. You can print from your cellphone or update your contact list easily and securely.

Bluetooth should become popular and prices will come down in spite of the extremely poor support from Microsoft.

The future will bring even more powerful wireless networks.

WIMAX is a wide area network technology for metropolitan areas.

3G is a future technology that will allow for the largest area networks. This will integrate cellular voice communications and high speed data transmission.

Communication by wireless is here. Power wires will annoy us for the foreseeable future.

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Wireless Security

When you purchase your wireless equipment it may be important to secure your network. By default wireless router/gateways have encryption turned off.

If you drive around town with a wireless laptop and check network availability you will find over 50% of networks are in the default state and are wide open to use and abuse. For many this is not an issue, but if you wish to have a secure network, or if you have an internal data sharing network, you must have the encryption turned on.

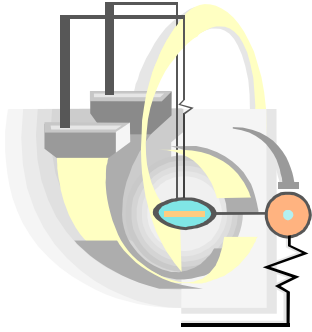
WEP Wired equivalency protocol. This comes in two flavours 64 and 128 bit. These are crackable by professionals but give reasonable protection to non critical networks. The average joe cracker is lazy and will just go down the street to an open network.

WPA Wi-Fi Protected Access.

This protocol is far more secure and should be used for most applications. You have to have recent hardware or update the firmware on your router and have XP service pack 2 to have this option.

If you are a doctor, lawyer, accountant, or other professional with a fiduciary duty to protect client data, avoid wireless networks. If someone is determined to crack your wireless security they will.

Two computer technicians are listening to an all news station while driving to a job. The traffic girl comes on and warns, "Please be on the lookout for a car on highway 401 that is driving against the traffic." The technician driving says: "One? No way, there are hundreds of them out there."



Wireless Caveats

Wireless has its problems. The most crucial is that it never seems to have quite enough range. Even though on the box it says that it will work over 300 feet, it will only do that on a sunny day, downhill with a tailwind and with absolutely nothing in the way.

Wireless will not work through a fireplace, refrigerator, filing cabinet, stucco, copper pipes, thick walls in old houses, water and some types of tile floors.

Due to the way the aeriels work there are dead areas where they physically point. The aeriels normally point vertically to have connectivity on the same floor.

You will get very poor signals directly above or below the base station.

The wavelengths used for wireless only travel in straight lines. Where an AM radio will work around obstacles, Wi-Fi works like a beam of light from a flashlight. If there is a radio absorbent object between sender and receiver then it will not work. Microwave ovens and some portable phones will interfere with the signal.

High gain antennas are available that greatly increase the range of a device. Omni directional aeriels are best for base stations and are usually all that is needed. With very high gain satellite dishes it is possible to get ranges in the tens of miles.

Free Stuff That Works

Getting ready to fork out a bunch more money for the subscription to your anti-virus? Should you purchase the new version or just re-subscribe?

A recent test of antivirus software against a suite of virii found that the most common antivirus programs were only 85 to 92 percent effective. And the costly well known ones were not at the top of the list.

There are three very good antivirus programs out there that are free for the home user, each of these are equal to the purchased packages.

They may be downloaded at:

AVG: free.grisoft.com

Antivir: free-av.com

Avast: www.avast.com.

These also have the benefit of being a lot faster on your computer.

The way to install them is to go to add-remove programs in the control panel and remove your current antivirus software. Then double click on the package you downloaded and follow the directions. You will get some solicitations to upgrade to the premium package, but you do not have to spend any money and these programs work very well.

Microsoft has a free program available on the front page of its website called **Windows Defender:** www.microsoft.com

This is an antispysware tool that really works well. It will only work on windows 2000 and XP so other programs are needed for older operating systems.

Two important free spyware cleaning programs are **Spybot** and **Ad-Aware**. Both may be found on the front page of: www.download.com

Do you do peer to peer sharing? Then you should look into **Shareaza:** www.shareaza.com Unlike most of the other software to do peer to peer this one has no included spyware. It searches over several of the networks and also works as a bittorrent client.

Need a wordprocessor that can do DOC files and not break the bank?

Open Office: www.openoffice.org

Services

I am here to solve your computing problems, I will help you on the phone for absolutely free. If the problem is too complicated to repair in a 10 minute phone call them I can come to your home or place of business, usually in less than one day.

I work with all levels of systems from the home user to medium networks (under 50 computers any more and you probably need full time administration), and with a very wide assortment of software. If there is a large job to be done I have associates who are specialists in such things as cabling, webpages, databases, printers, programming etc.

I repair all types of computer equipment, desktops, laptops, servers, etc.

I administer major operating systems and software, Windows, Apple, Linux, Novell, Sco.

I can secure your system of virii, spyware, malware etc. and protect it from further attack.

I can train you, with your software, and save you hundreds of dollars by installing free open source software to accomplish your daily tasks.

I make office and housecalls, when it is convenient for you. 9 to 9 Monday to Saturday.

Any IT need that you have, I will find the best solution for you.

Just phone and try my service, you will be satisfied.

Rates: \$60.00 an hour onsite or in depot.

\$300 per day rate.

\$30.00 an hour for private training.

Minimum onsite charge \$30.00.



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